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ABSTRACT

Brazil has one of the most inequitable income distributions in the world, and schools perpetuate the processes of social exclusion. This paper examines processes of social exclusion in the municipal elementary schools of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. Interviews with municipal superintendents focused on the schools' welfare services, particularly school meals and rural school transportation; how violence appears in the context of school and municipality; and issues of remuneration, training, and working conditions of elementary school teachers. Although school meals and rural transport programs were designed to address some causes of student failure and dropout and thereby promote social inclusion, the strain on poorer municipalities of funding such programs contributed to maintaining inequalities. In addition, the administrative demands of the programs drew professional attention away from the sphere of education, creating another barrier to quality education in disadvantaged areas. The expression of social problems in the form of violence prevented student progress and took up much of educators' time. It was also observed that teacher remuneration and training were related, such that low salaries interfered with teacher training and qualifications. (SV)

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Janaina S.S.Menezes[3]

Presented at the 2002 annual CIES conference
Orlando, FL, March 6-9

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# The process of social in (ex)clusion in schools: data from reality.[1]

Marta Luz Sisson de Castro[2]
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**Abstract**: The purpose of this study is to analyze the social exclusion process in the municipal elementary schools in the State of Rio Grande do Sul, as regards its welfare character from the standpoint of school meals and school transport. The study, with education as a point of reference, uses data from interviews with Municipal Superintendents of Education in several municipalities in the state. The data analysis showed that the assumption of new social roles by the school, essential considering the national context, has two opposing faces: at the same time as it includes the young in the educational process, it excludes them from a quality education "for all". Considering that exclusion also affects the professional educator, the text presents some aspects related to preparation for the job, and the remuneration of teachers. The issue of violence in the school space is also discussed as a reflection of a broad process of social exclusion.

**Descriptors** – Social Exclusion; School Meals; School Transport; Teacher training; Remuneration of teachers; Violence.

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## Introduction and Context

The globalization of the economy has led the current world to new levels of economic and technological development. To the contrary of what was to be expected from the social standpoint, the idea of exclusion was reinforced, since a significant proportion of the world population has not benefited from these processes.

The neoliberal concept "that modernization and economic growth is the way to solve social problems is still fashionable"(Assman, 2000, p.87). The aforementioned author, beginning with the perspective that economic development and social development are not directly related variables, emphasizes that "in a market society like ours, to be unemployed, without the help of the State or

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[1] This article arose as a proposal for a collective study in the Advanced Seminar on Education, offered during the first semester of 2001, "Social Exclusion at school: Data from reality", offered by the Graduate Program in Education, at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul –PUCRS, coordinated by Prof. Marta Luz Sisson de Castro, and it also had the collaboration of students Arlete Elvira Mallner, Liana da Silva Borges, Márcia Terra Ferreira Reis and Vanessa Besstil da Rocha.

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family members, means to be excluded from the spaces and relationships that enable one to live in a dignified manner" (Idem, p.88). Developing countries, such as Brazil, suffer very much, since this international model of development constitutes a significant eliminator from the work force, contributing to increase poverty and the number of excluded.

A study performed by the Organization of American States – OAS (1998), on the situation of education in Latin America shows that most children (93%), in the 7-12 age group, were enrolled in some level or type of schooling. The chronological observation of these data indicates that Latin America is beginning to provide universal care at this age level. This does not necessarily mean a reduction of social exclusion, which, reinforced by the following ensemble of problems, tends to be expressed within/from the school limits:

"All have access to elementary school, but there are elementary schools with very different qualities, a difference which is hidden under the appearance of the same national certificate of approval. In this case the appearance of 'for all' dissipates, and the dualization of the model becomes clear, in which a supposedly universal right is exerted in one way by a first class citizen (if obtained by income) and in another by a second class citizen ( if achieved by public action)". (Coraggio, 2000, p.90).

In this sense, Assmann(1996) clearly shows three basic functions for school in the present-day world, so that it will add up conditions which can enable countering the exclusion generated by the different forms of illiteracy:

"There are three types of illiteracy that have to be defeated today: that of reading-writing(knowing how to read and write), sociocultural (knowing in what type of society one lives, for instance, knowing the market mechanisms), and technological (knowing how to interact with complex machines). Any school that is incompetent at one of these aspects is socially backward."(p.22)"

The broadening of the education system, in Brazil and Latin America, does not ensure that the school will be offering an education that will overcome the three illiteracies presented above.

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Furthermore, in the specific case of Brazil, despite the continuous growth of educational care in the mandatory age groups, there are still many who do not even manage to get a place at school. Statistics about this are harsh, and provide testimony to the fact that, in 1996, in Brazil, according to data presented in the National Plan of Education (PNE-Plano Nacional de Educação), 2.7 million children, aged 7-14, were not at school. These results oblige one to ask a few questions. How possible will it be for these young people, mostly from the lower-income classes, to reflect, interfere and reorient their reality? What function, if any, will they be able to perform on the internationalized capital market?

These questions lead us to the following reflection:

"The exclusion of children from school at the appropriate age, either by government neglect or by omission of the family and society, is the most perverse and irreversible form of social exclusion, since it denies the elementary right of citizenship, reproducing the circle of poverty and lawlessness, and taking away from millions of Brazilians any prospect for the future... In most situations, the fact that there are children out of school does not have as its determining cause the deficit of places at school, it is actually related to the precariousness of teaching and the conditions of exclusion and social lawlessness in which segments of the Brazilian population live"(PNE, 2001c, p.6).

On these issues is superimposed the fact that, although Brazil cannot be considered a poor country, it has one of the worst income distributions in the world: "International comparison, as to per capita income, puts Brazil among the richest third of world countries, and, therefore, does not allow us to consider it a poor country"(Barros et al., 2000, p.126). In this context, social exclusion appears as one of the new, perverse faces of globalization.

It is generally perceived that two exclusion processes occur concurrently: one that originates in the sociopolitical and economic, extra-school conditions, that render difficult or impossible access to and staying within the educational system; another, related to intra-school conditions, represented by the quality indicators expressed in a different manner for public and private schools, by the high rates of failure at school, by the difficulty in accepting cultural differences (language, gender, race, ethnic groups, for instance), among others.

Beginning from the perspective that knowledge of the dimensions taken on by the problems of poverty and exclusion, in a given context, helps seek feasible solutions for the reorganization of forms of resistance and struggle, this study constitutes an initial attempt to construct a vision of the social exclusion process related to the school environment, beginning with the view of some Municipal Secretaries of Education (SMEs-Secretários Municipais de Educação) of Rio Grande do Sul. For this purpose, it makes selective use of data collected in two surveys[4] performed previously by one of the authors.

Within the limits of this paper, we cannot comment all the topics related to social exclusion. Thus, we chose to discuss the school's welfare character in greater detail, related to the care of some needs of the students in the form of offering transport and school meals for the elementary school students. School transport for the students and school meals, conceived as policies to fight school waste (dropping out + failure to pass), which do not correspond to what is expected, emerged in some of the surveys done at the Municipal Secretarys of Education (SMEDs-Secretarias Municipais de Educação), as factors that, by spending time and resources, often take educational managers away from their end -activities, i.e., the political-pedagogical process, thus showing two opposing faces: at the same time as it includes the young at school, it excludes them from a process of equal quality "for all".

We will also discuss the issue of drugs and violence in the school space, as reflexes of a broad process of social exclusion. Considering that exclusion is not simply a problem of students from less privileged social classes, but also a problem of the professional educator, we will approach several points regarding teacher training and remuneration. The information, besides indicating that social issues are shaping educational processes, indicates the need to salvage the true role of education for the lower income classes, from a perspective of inclusion.

## 1. School as a venue for Welfare

[4] These surveys are connected to the Graduate Program in Education at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul and are part of the Integrated Project Management of Basic School, funded by FINEP (Financiadores de Estudos e Projeto) and by Fapergs (Fundação de Apoio à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul), performed during the period from 1996 to 1999. The two sub-projects used were "Municipal School Principal: Profile, Education and Professional Development", and "Leadership and Socio-Educational Profile of the Municipal Secretaries of Education in Rio Grande do Sul".

Brazilian public school, for a number of social reasons, has increasingly become the worker's school, and is marked by this welfare character that renders the work of an educator more complex, and sometimes more difficult.

"Besides the pedagogical understanding, the school has social responsibilities that extrapolate simple teaching, especially for poor children. In order to ensure a better balance and performance of the students, it is necessary to broaden the provision of welfare, above all in the lower income municipalities, with procedures such as minimum income associated to education, school meals, school books and school transport" (PNE, 2001, p.6).

From the perspective that the government's view is rather to fight poverty as a factor that prevents the economy from achieving higher profits than to guarantee citizenship, previous studies performed by Castro (1995) showed that the attempt to fight the explosion of the social problem by means of the school, in itself carries a character of exclusion of the educational processes. If, on the one hand, public school seeks to fulfill its social role, providing the right to education for those who are at the edge of capital, and as such at the edge of capitalist society, on the other, it takes on other expectations and roles, besides those traditionally expected.

Thus, within the limits of this study initially we will discuss the school's welfare character perceived from the point of view of school meals and school transport. Here we have already stressed that we are not fighting the use of school, a public social space, as an instrument to drive welfare measures and fight exclusion. What we are doing is, as presented previously, seeking to show that the fact of the school taking up these new responsibilities in a way shows the imbrication of two apparently dichotomic variables: in(ex)clusion.

### 1.1 **School meals**

In an attempt to fight the high rates of school failure and contribute to improve the quality of teaching, the Federal Constitution of 1988 determined that it was the duty of the State to *provide care to the student, in elementary teaching, by means of supplementary programs of school teaching material, transport, meals and health care (*Art.208, Clause VII). Considering that the

offer of meals and dropping out of school are presented in an inverse relationship, the Ministry of Education and Sports, by means of the National Fund for Development of Education (FNDE[5] Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento Escolar), made available the National Program of School Meals (PNAE-Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar), which consists in *the largest food supplementation program of the world* (Famurs, 1997, p.39). Its objective is to partially supply the nutritional needs of the pre-school and elementary school students, offering 15% of the daily requirements of calories and proteins to public school students.

The PNAE also aims to "use the offer of at least one adequate daily meal, to improve the capacity of teaching-learning, form good eating habits – educate people for nutrition and prevent dropping out of school and failure to pass"(MEC, 2001, p.1).

Currently, the per capita value of school meals correspond to R$0.13 per student/day of elementary school, and R$0.06 per student/day of pre-school and philanthropic organizations. Doubtless, these values that have been frozen since 1995, have a long way to go to favor higher standards of quality for school meals. However, the PNAE has a supplementary character, i.e., it expects to receive the financial counterpart from the states and municipalities, which , if on the one hand appears logic or even just, on the other shows a cruel face in which the poorer states and municipal administration (with a very low tax revenue), will have small or no possibility of complementing the scanty federal funds, and have applied in the meals of their children, an amount of resources that is much lower than that invested by the wealthier states/municipalities. Taking a more pessimistic view, when this public policy ignores the different nuances that permeate national reality, it contributes to maintain the inequalities installed in the contradictory realities of Brazil.

In a letter titled *A educação municipal quer ser ouvida (Municipal Education wants to be heard)*, the 8th Forum of the National Union of Municipal Leaders of Education[6] - Undime (União Nacional dos Dirigentes Municipais de Educação), expressed its indignation at the sums transferred by the federal government to PNAE.: "we will continue at the crossroads of having to offer school meals, receiving, from the Federal government, extremely low values, which causes us to provide meals without the minimum amount of nutrients for our children who come mainly from the most

[5] Managing agency of the federal funds related to elementary school.
[6] This took place April 18-21, 2001, in Brasília.

excluded strata of our society" (p.2).. As long as the Federal Government sees school meals as a "tactic" to *assuage hunger and prevent diseases,* for which, as they see it, infinitely small resources *per capita* are sufficient, it will be distant from a broader prospect related to nutritional education and the health of students.

Information indicates that, despite the fact that federal funds made available for school meals are well below values that make it possible to provide high standards of quality, these resources are very important in the budgetary context of the city administrations investigated. In this sense, the change in the wording of Article 3, of Law 10, 697/96, by State Law nr.1`1,602/2001, determining that "*the States, Federal District and municipalities will no longer depend on proving that they have not defaulted on their obligations to the federal government in order to receive funds related to the maintenance of school meal programs and school textbooks*", was against social injustice, which penalized children bearing the social stigma of belonging mostly to the less privileged classes of our society, by not carrying the financial-administrative obligations of managers of the city administrations of which they are part. What one of the SMEs (Municipal Secretary of Education) says shows the problems of the SMEDs, before the aforementioned Law was enacted.

*"Our situation is still serious, so much so that our mayor went to Brasilia. We have historical debts to the INSS( National Social Security System), and to the FGTS (Fund of Guarantee of Time Worked), which made the city administration default ; the city administration was written into the Registry of Defaulters (Cadin- Cadastro de Inadimplentes), in the SPC (Credit Protection Services) of the city administrations, and we have not even received the transfers of money for the meals, the city schools are not in an appropriate condition to receive money to buy the meals. So we bought for the two first weeks, thinking that channels would then open, but it is a very long bureaucratic route. We paid this, and afterwards in fact, I bitterly regretted it, because I should have purchased desks, chairs, textbooks...* " (Interview 22, p.2).

Despite the fact that the children's nutritional needs are not being fully taken care of by the school meal programs, it was possible to perceive how indispensable they were in the context of the study. The next report, from an SME, shows the importance of the meals in the reality studied: "*There are students who arrive in the morning and the teacher and school lunch lady cannot wait to give them*

*a meal at the normal times. Something has to be offered this student in order for him/her to be able to work". (*Interview 7, p.12).

The awareness of the importance of this meal for the children made some of the SMEDs, intending to offer the students quality food, seek advisory services that could create, within a limited budget, a balanced menu, or at least one as rich as possible.

In many schools, there is a whole infrastructure that must be managed and kept up (canteen, industrial kitchen, freezers, refrigerators and others), requiring time and the availability of human resources in order to deal with the issue of meals, showing the need to perform follow up and evaluation, both as regards quality and fund-raising and the use of funds.

The main point is the deviation from the academic issue, i.e., the issue of education is often subordinated to administrative aspects. This fact is proved by what one of the SMEs said, "*the administrative issue is much greater than the pedagogical one; I have not yet managed to become involved in the pedagogical one, although I have a very good pedagogical group... Administrative work really takes up much of one's time"* (Interview 13, p.1). In many cases, the school, although aware that this should not be its priority, due to the social appeal and, in an attempt to help minimize the excluding character that is rooted in Brazilian Society, takes on several dimensions.

There is such an involvement in these issues that, often, the principal and or teachers take on the role of lunch ladies or janitors. It should be pointed out that the welfare character of school care, for some of the SMEDs investigated, does not obscure their greater challenge: *"our objective is not the meal, our goal is a political-pedagogical project for the schools, to work with the people along theses lines. Meals are something necessary that we do as we go. Other factors must be developed, because otherwise the children don't learn, and they lose by it" (*Interview 19, p.8).

These reports indicate that there are different ways of looking at a same issue, which is school meals. Regarding the latter it has become clear that school must have as its main responsibility the issue of education, which does not mean not to offer meals or not to concern itself with the meals. However, the multiplicity of roles taken on by the school indicate anxieties that must be the subject of discussion. Public school (Castro, 1995), having become mainly the school of the working

classes, has changed, and taken on this welfare character, mediating between the students and other agencies and public services that are available. These new responsibilities provoke an accumulation of roles that often detract from its main function.

### 1.2 School transport

Rural education is a cause for concern in most Brazilian municipalities. Besides the picture of inequalities, built in the national context, it may be noted that the situation of this modality of teaching, in the Rio Grande do Sul municipalities surveyed, is not significantly different from that in other regions of Brazil. At the same time as the physical conditions are precarious, rural schools have to live with obstacles that are difficult to overcome: several grades in the same classroom, a single teacher and the low qualification of teachers run together to drive very high indicators of failure at school.

In the attempt to seek alternatives for this modality of teaching, a large number of SMEs implemented the process of school nucleation which, from 1997 to 1999, resulted in a reduction on the order of 16.5% of the number of teaching establishments[7] located in Brazilian rural areas. In order to provide better physical and pedagogical conditions and, in some cases, reduce the high cost of education in the rural area, the SMEDs nucleated some of those student to larger and/or better structured schools,. Transporting schoolchildren was the alternative found to enable the process to be put into effect – which in Brazil has been happening not only in the rural area, but in general. In the specific case of Rio Grande do Sul, the studies that provide an integrated view of the nucleation process, as a whole, have not yet been disseminated. However, a priori it is known that school nucleation, in general, is following a national trend.

The federal government has been contributing to this dynamics by means of the National Program of School Transport (PNTE-Programa Nacional de Transporte Escolar), whose purpose it is *to offer school transport to a student who lives in a rural area, in order to ensure his access to and remaining in school, eradicating dropping out* (MEC, 2001b, p.1). The PNTE basically consists of

[7] Value calculated based on the data of the Statistical Synopsis of Basic Education for 1999.

financial aid[8] to the municipalities to purchase buses, microbuses, vans and boats (in riparian areas such as in the Amazon Region).

Considering that the PNTE is aimed exclusively at the municipal sphere, and that Article 211 of the Brazilian Federal Constitution (1988) determines that the Union, States and Municipalities should cooperate to organize their educational systems (organize their teaching systems in a collaborative regime), and also should define *forms of collaboration in order to ensure the universalization of elementary school (*para.4), the municipalities researched, according to the agreement[9] between the Departments of Educations of the states and municipalities, besides the students of their own system, also transport those of the state schools. *"One has to carry this student who is not ours, he belong to the State system, but one has a counterpart (...), one has to support him to continue studying, otherwise he will not come"(*Interview 13, p.2).

However, this attempt to facilitate the student's access to school and reduce the rate of school drop outs, encounters serious obstacles presented by the municipalities: a) the heavy expenses with school transport consume a significant share of their education budget; b) the state transfers cover only part of the expenses of their own students; c) the high cost of maintenance; and d) the insufficient number of vehicles to transport a large number of students leads to the following: *"...the first to leave home are the last to get home. There are children who arrive as late as almost 2pm. This makes it very tiring!"*(Interview 14, p.8).

The certainty of the importance of transporting schoolchildren as one of the instruments that may help achieve greater possibilities of success at school, led the 8th Forum of Undime to launch the following challenge/demand: "Let the states really pay for the students who are transported by the municipalities, establishing quick, flexible ways of making the decision feasible, beyond what is established, via FNDE, as one of the main priorities, lines of financing, with a view to acquiring school transport for the municipalities" (2001, p.3).

Empirical data have indicated that, in most cases, the cost of transport is very high, as compared to the municipal budgets. School transport is almost higher than the expenditures on staff, and

[8] In the year 2000, R$50,000.00 (fifty thousand reais) for basic education and R$25,000.00 (twenty-five thousand reais) for special education.

becomes one of the largest items in the expenses of some Municipal Departments of Education: *"School transport, this is the highest expenditure on education in the municipality. Obviously, this does not take the payroll into account, but school transport significantly raises the budget"*.(Interview 7, p.11). There are many reasons for the cost and they range from the size of municipalities to the maintenance of the fleet of buses, conditions of the roads, outsourcing the services or not.

Some situations reveal a certain amount of anxiety, because they do not manage to transport the students within the established costs, forcing the SMEs to follow and inspect the companies that participate in the tenders and that sometimes form a cartel, in which the cost per passenger is not significantly different between the different competitors.

In one of the municipalities with a rather widespread rural population, it was suggested that there be an alternative calendar as a way of overcoming problems with expenditures and road conditions: *"So we have to take the students who finish these school to the central schools and we have approximately two thousand students... there are children, then, who leave at seven or eight o'clock in the morning and return at two in the afternoon, to stay at school for three or four hours. They spend more time on the muddy roads. So we thought up another type of care, which was to have the student stay at school the whole day, so he goes there in the morning, stays the whole morning, has lunch, stays there in the afternoon, and goes home in the afternoon. We divided the students into A and B. Those in Group A come to school on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and group B on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and reverse this the next week."* (Interview 4, p.3-4).

With this alternative calendar, transport costs were diminished, and so also was the problem of lack of classrooms and physical space available, since only 50% of the students will be present on any given day. This program was still in the initial phase of implementation when we carried out the interviews, and we do not know the evaluation of the results that, from the pedagogical standpoint are troubling. The SME of that municipality was itself aware of the need to discuss education systematically: *"Sometimes I ask the people here, when are we going to sit down to discuss education? Because we have a serious problem here, that is school transport..."*(Interview 4, p.3).

[9] Agreement SE nr.0003/2001.

In some cases, the definition of the areas covered by the municipalities can in itself become a problem for the bordering Municipal Departments of Education. The difficulty in establishing clear territorial limits between municipalities located in rural areas sometimes make it difficult for these Departments to distinguish which of them should carry the responsibility (and the financial burden) of transporting the schoolchildren who live in these places.

The differences and conditions prevailing in each municipality make the problem of transport one of the largest and most relevant in the municipal administration of education, leading fourteen of the twenty-two municipalities studied to make a statement about it. In this context, in which the discussion of administrative issues is often greater than that inherent to aspects concerning education, there is the question of what the role of education for the popular classes should be, or else, the broader question of the role of school and the possibilities that its action could modify structural situations of an economic and social nature.

**2. Violence**

The issue of violence appears in the context of the municipal schools investigated, in experiences reported by the directors, ranging from situations occurring within the physical area of the school – sometimes discipline-related and involving families – to problems with different forms of external violence that occurred in the neighborhood where the institution is located. Many of the interviewees showed concern regarding thefts and robberies at the institutions under their responsibility. TVs and VCRs locked away behind bars were common at the schools visited.

The SME of one of the municipalities researched presented a report on a school that it considered *the worst in the municipality*, located in a very problematic neighborhood, which showed the violence-death confluence:

*"The worst school in the municipality(...), I worked there. When I arrived at that school I had a 3rd grade, with eighteen students. I was very happy, eighteen students, very few students, that I want. Eleven were outlaws, eleven carried a gun in their belt. Of the eleven, last year, when I did a study (I taught religion), seven have already died.."* (Interview 13, p.13).

Despite this imbrication, society at large has denied the antagonism and precariousness of the human condition, rendering death invisible to daily life. Death, in general, has become a camouflaged subject, avoided and forbidden, even at the schools. Violence and death, transmitted on television, have become characterized as shows, and as such, fictitious and distant from reality. "As they become shows, these unique human experiences begin to lose their qualitative dimension and their non-interchangeable character and are reduced to a point experience, without any memory and dialogue about the social foundations of society"(Assmann, 2000, p.101).

In denying death, man forgets his human condition, he no longer recognizes himself nor the human condition of people who suffer the processes of exclusion and social insensitivity (Ibidem).

The students previously mentioned in the report, who had been repeating grades sequentially, immersed in this society – that cries at the TV drama, but closes itself against real life – came from marginalized families in which violence was a constant presence of daily life. This daily life was reflected in the classroom by the play activities: *"...it came from a family culture in which everyone was an outlaw (..) when they were to act in a play, it was always scenes of death, fights, knifings.. This was always present, I even despaired, but I continued to go there... I have some people from that class who are now working."*(Interview 13, p. 15).

The teacher made several attempts to bring them back to a path that would lead to critique and overcoming that reality. Few managed to reconfigure their future. However, since it is an issue of the human condition, the quantitative aspect cannot be used as a representative measure.

*"They passed, they had been 5 or 6 years in third grade, and they entered the 4th grade. I went with them all the way to the 5th grade in Mathematics, because they bothered everyone. Nobody wanted them, and I didn't want them to be expelled from school, so I went with them on to the 5th grade. I was head teacher of this class 53, which was always a smaller group of students. They accompanied me, they were always with me, and they managed to pass properly; they went to exhibitions, to museums... they didn't touch anything. Only, of course, there were day when they... at night, I knew that they had done this or that, there were shoot-outs even... The first one who died, we all went to the funeral. When I returned from the funeral, I discussed all this with them. Two of them were real outlaws, and they no longer are. They work, they have jobs..."* (Interview 13, p.14).

At the time of the interview, the previously mentioned teacher was municipal secretary of education in that municipality. That initial experience, and following up those youths for over twenty years, drove her to develop programs/partnerships related to education in the street, and to implement cultural workshops that would enable forms of paid activity for young people from the lower classes, but who had serious difficulties as regards family guidance, and were in a way neglected by the government.

The reports generally confirm the idea that school in day to day life no longer is able to deal with the many social problems it encounters, but the reward is already quite significant if it manages to remove even a single one from the path to trouble. One of the principals interviewed told of the case of a student who was touched significantly by a little bit of attention and understanding, which were sufficient to help him change his future.

*"It is not emotional... It is much easier not to concern oneself with people, because then they do not take up so much of your time. Doing the right thing takes more time, wears one out more, but there is something, when you come home at night and say: "Well, I can sleep because I'm sowing something good. Something good will come of this sooner or later". We have the example of a student who was rebellious from the first grade: he was beaten a lot by his father and mother, they called him stupid. One day he was going home angry, the teacher had expelled him from the classroom. He was leaving furious, crying... I called him for a chat, and I spent the rest of the morning with him. You must have seen him: he wears a little goatee, and works here at City Hall... He is studying and working, he is a completely different person. When he sees me, he says: "Oh Beth, that was a great time in that school. How I used to enjoy chatting with you.". In those days it would have been easier to say: "I'm not going to lose time, go away, let him fend for himself. Let the parents do what they can too. It is none of my business." Now, he is helping his sick mother.".* (Interview no. 6. (Principals), p.13).

The idea imparted is that we should not be discouraged by unattained goals, what we have to do is value the positive effects that we have achieved with some.

Despite the fact that the reports show a reality characterized by violence, ultimately they indicate that another direction is possible and make us reflect on the need to bet on hope: "When I look around, I see only lack of hope in the world. And, despite everything, I and everyone has to try and find a source of hope. We have to believe in man, despite man"(Horkheimer, apud Assmann, 2000,p. 105).

Hope implies an a priori internalization of the human condition of those who are "inside-and-outside"society, and who are in the same circumstances. To be more specific, man will only develop hope after accepting the human condition of the different, the excluded. In this sense, hope makes people glimpse alternatives and begin to bet on the possibility of change. Assmann and Sung (2000, p. 103) define "human hope" as a "horizon woven with desire", emphasizing the need "for us to build a world into which many, many worlds fit", and that hope be built by solidary action among all men.

Another negative experience that was turned around concerns a school that, even with bars, was constantly robbed and vandalized. However, calling the police increased the dimension of the problem, because when *night fell they returned and did horrible things.* The way to solve this situation was found to be building a sports area (the only one in the neighborhood), which was open to the community on weekends. The feeling that the sports area belonged to the community triggered responsibility/commitment to its upkeep, and thus acts of violence against the school began to be fought by the population itself.

## 2. Remuneration, training and working conditions of the teachers

The study found that, in general, the municipalities surveyed find it difficult to guarantee a true valuing of its education professionals. This distance becomes greater when the analysis takes into account the new Law of Guidelines and Fundamentals of National Education (LDB-Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional), Law nr. 9394/96, which begins from the standpoint that enhancing the value of education professionals must be ensured by teaching systems in the terms of the Rules and Regulations and Career Plans of Public School Teachers (Estatutos e Planos de Carreira do Magistério Público (Art. 67), including: entry only by public competitive examination; continued further professional training; minimum professional wage; progression in employment,

based on titles or on qualification and the evaluation of performance; period reserved for studying; and appropriate working conditions. If the requirements of this law are not fulfilled, it leads to the exclusion not only of the professional educator, but also of those directly related to him: mainly family and students.

During the data collection process, the researcher recalls the hands of one of the teachers at the rural schools, which showed signs that she did heavy work daily. The teachers in the study were generally housewives who did all of their housework, besides working 40 hours a week at the school. The accumulation of tasks performed by this professional, who sometimes does not have even the minimum level of training required to work at the level of schooling under her responsibility, usually makes it difficult to perform pedagogical work which will result in the development of autonomy, critique and a solid schooling of these young people. In many municipalities, to the contrary of what was to be expected, it was found that untrained teachers are still a reality to be overcome by the SMEDs that were included in the study.

Some of the people who worked at the SMEDs remarked that the salaries are low, but that they are better than those paid by the State, and that "at least they are paid on time" – the minimum that would be require of any employing agency.

It was observed that the limitations of the teachers due to their salaries often prevent them from taking update courses and sometimes even initial training. Teacher training depends on many factors, but its clear importance to advance local education made the percentage of teachers with higher education in some municipalities approach 93%(Interview nr. 11). Part of this advance is due to the integration of the municipal systems with the local universities, by means of special programs for teachers, ranging from transport to the closest universities to on-the-job training courses, indicating that this is something to be undertaken by several municipalities. On the other hand, continued on-the-job training limits the changes to be achieved with the teachers, insofar as they do not have much time available to dedicate to studies, and the municipal systems are not able to maintain replacement teachers. Weekend courses, as long as they are not attempts to provide more superficial training, are a feasible option and, in many cases, the only one for professionals who must improve their training and, at the same time, maintain their performance in the classroom.

When referring to the conditions of enhancing the value education professionals, it is important to emphasize that they are closely related to the salary, specifically, in the Brazilian case, to the low salaries. In the testimonies there were often complaints on this issue, which was not surprising, since common sense has already incorporated the relationship between the teaching profession and low salaries. This fact, as mentioned previously, together with the minuscule possibilities of incentives given by the State and the Municipalities, work against the issue of teacher training and updating.

The municipalities that began to receive funds when the Law of the Fund of Maintenance and Valuing of Teachers (Fundef- Fundo de Manutenção e Valorização do Magistério) generally had the salaries of their teachers raised in the form of a bonus, since 60% of those funds must be invested in paying professional teachers (art.7 of Law 9424/96). On the other hand, the municipalities in which part of the educational resources were transferred to other municipalities in a worse situation by Fundef, had and will continue to undergo difficulties, not only to raise the salaries of their teachers, but also to ensure better conditions for their education. The state network, which is the main agent responsible for maintaining the Fund in the State, for this reason among others, underwent a steep devaluation of the salaries of teachers in its network. Despite the legal provision that ensures part of the Fund resources to pay teachers, except for a few municipalities the salaries are below a level that will express a significant advance in the enhancement of education professionals.

In this context, several factors related to social exclusion could be examined. As Codo (1999) writes, the teacher himself, insofar as he earns a miserably low salary, is mostly unable to update and carry out work that will lead to competence and professional autonomy. There are data indicating that the teacher resists these adverse conditions, limiting his action and involvement, and avoiding the burnout[10] that will lead to giving up work in education. This factor has huge implications on the issue of social exclusion, since, depending on the conditions, the educator himself will be a socially excluded person. It has a reproductive effect in a cycle that tends to self-perpetuation. The teacher earns such a low salary that it is impossible for him to progress further, without which progress he will continue to be badly paid, even further weakening this class of workers and, what is worse, reducing the chances that school and education will be able to turn

around the social situation that has been identified. This cycle is self-reproduced with low expectations, performance and results, and must somehow be broken, in order to make it possible to offer quality education to all Brazilians.

Reading the reports showed the need for the SMEDs to work on the issue of the teachers hope and enhancement. Besides the different nuances that permeate the enhancement of education professionals, teachers require better working conditions in order to carry out their job to the full. They also need to receive a salary compatible with their dignity, that will allow them to face the minimum requirements for personal and professional survival.

The career plans that are being developed in the different municipalities, indicate the possibility of enhancing teachers' professional training, experience and updating, encouraging them to seek new levels of competence. Achieving these new working conditions will, however, depend on a greater involvement of society itself, demanding and valuing the task of education, seeking to overcome current social inequalities.

**Final Thoughts**

It is nothing new to state that Brazilian education policies are based on the conditions of the World Bank, resulting in discursive homogeneity between their agents and ours. Since 1990, the Bank has declared that its major objective is "the attack on poverty" and, consequently, social exclusion. However, what one notices is that its investments in social sectors aim to prevent politically critical situations that might place the political support for the structural adjustment at risk. These social policies, characterized by the expression "for all" – health, water, sanitation and education for all – actually do not include jobs, and, therefore, neither do they include income for all (Coraggio, 2000), basic conditions to truly fight inequalities and achieve citizenship. Policies to fight exclusion must be based on a serious project that seeks to "deconcentrate" income, a basic factor to reduce social inequalities. One should recall Cervantes who wrote "where there are inequalities there is no freedom", when what one seeks is to free the excluded/different from the social exclusion process.

[10] Distress caused by the lag between "work as it should be" and "the reality of work" at schools (Codo, 1999,p.85).

The perception that we are co-responsible for national policies of education, and that the school, contradictorily, constitutes an instrument of social inclusion and exclusion, led us to perform this study which analyzed the process of social exclusion in the municipal schools of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, observing three aspects: the school's welfare character, with the topics of school meals and school transport; how violence appears in the context of the schools and municipality and, finally, the issue of remuneration, training and working conditions of elementary school teachers.

We observed that, although the school meals and transport programs were designed from the perspective of dealing with failure at school, and, beyond doubt, as such they were highly relevant to reduce this troubling reality, on the other hand, contradictorily, they showed a face that contributes to "settling" the social inequalities/exclusion in the context investigated. For instance, when the National Program of School Meals (PNAE- Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar) ignores the existence of significant budget differences among city administrations, and expects a financial counterpart/addition to the funds give by MEC for that purpose, it contributes to maintaining the inequalities that are installed in the opposing realities of this countries, so that, ultimately, children in the poorer muncipalities mostly receive meals that are not comparable to those of the wealthier municipalities.

From the information it could be observed that both the food programs and those related to school transport, among other activities, take up a large amount of the SMEDs' time and resources, and they generally have few professionals so that often the sphere of education is supplanted by administrative issues. "Carelessness" with education aspects, will, in a way, subsidize the social exclusion of the young people who are part of this reality.

The empirical data show the expression of the social problem in the form of violence at school, preventing the development of a quality education "for all". It was also observed that remuneration and training, as items constituting the enhancement of education professionals, from the perspective of the interviewees, are directly related, showing that the low salaries in a way prevent progress in the training/qualification of teachers, contributing to including the teacher in the group of socially and professionally excluded.

The processes of social exclusion involve human beings in a relationship of interdependency, only perceived by apprehending a systemic view of social reality: people are what they are, because they are part of a social whole, and they would not exist if other people and the social system did not exist (Assmann, 2000). Thus, we are all "connected to each other on the Net", and what affects other people, somehow, some day, progressively, will affect all.

The awareness of the interconnection of all/among all may be one of the motives that leverage surpassing the barriers of individuality – characteristic of globalized man – in order to lead us to seek greater human understanding which, according to Morin (2000), includes knowledge from subject to subject, i.e., *the other is understood as a subject with whom we identify and who we identify with us* (p.95). In this sense, the excluded/different would become part, under the conditions of equality in human conditions. The same author also emphasizes that two attitudes are essential to develop understanding: a) "thinking well", that makes it possible to apprehend what is complex, i.e., the conditions of human behavior; and, b) the introspection which consists in the mental practice of permanent and necessary self-examination, because this *allows us to decentrate in relation to ourselves (...) allows us to not take on the position of judge of all things (*p.100).

Finally, still from Morin' s perspective (2000), teaching comprehension consists in one of the bases of education for peace, the objective of the education in any era that seeks to overcome the inequalities and the exclusion processes, inside and outside school.

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